



CONSTANTINE: A TRAGEDY.

IN FIVE ACTS.



BY J. C. KITTREDGE.



CONSTANTINE:

A TRAGEDY.

BY J. C. KITTREDGE. 6



BOSTON:
PUBLISHED BY THE AUTHOR.
1881.

7

PS635
.Z9 K62

COPYRIGHTED, 1881, BY J. C. KITTREDGE.

T. W. BIPLEY, PRINTER, 138 CONGRESS STREET, BOSTON.

TMP96-0065C8

CONSTANTINE:

A TRAGEDY.

IN FIVE ACTS.

PERSONS REPRESENTED.

CONSTANTINE, Emperor of Rome.

CRISPUS, his son.

DALMATIUS, an Officer in the Roman Army.

MAXIMIN, “ “ “ “ “ “

EUSEBIUS, Archbishop of Cæsarea.

PORPHYRIUS, a Poet.

MINERVINIA, Empress of Constantine.

THEODOSIA, a Roman lady of rank, betrothed to Crispus.

HELENA, a Maid-of-Honor.

Questor, Councillors, Heralds, Attendants, etc.

CONSTANTINE:

A TRAGEDY.

ACT I.

SCENE FIRST.

An Apartment in the Palace at Rome.

Enter MINERVINIA, HELENA, and Attendants.

Helena. How wearily the days do pass,
Your Majesty ! There are no fêtes at all,
Of gallant meetings there are none as well, —
No chivalrous society so gay ;
And, if the Court does not ere long return,
I surely shall of weary ennui die.

Minervinia. We miss our lords and lovers, it is true.
This time of widowhood is sure, but short.
The troops will now, we think, quite soon return.
But why are we like parasitical plants,
Which, when alone, so weak they cannot live,
But are compelled on stronger ones to lean ?
In countries wild, in that they us excel ;
For women, there, their husbands do assist,
And equal burden carry in their lives.
Should it be said that Roman women are
Far lower e'en than savages ? Ah, no.
Let us improve, by labor hard and long,
To know of state affairs, of wars afar, —
Of foreign countries know, and learn and think,
And teach ourselves the courses of the stars ;
Improve our minds in ev'ry way should we.

The men alone shall not bright wreaths sustain,
But from their heads their triumphs half we'll tear,
And name of Roman matron then shall be
Revered and famous e'en as that of Roman.

Helena. Great Empress, your picture is a gloomy one to me.
In joyous pleasure only, I see life.
Such drudgery laborious would drive me mad.
Besides, I not its object see.

The men are but our servants,
And always keep our state in happy peace.
They toil and labor but for us alone,
As while a life of pleasure we do lead.
I fear my royal lady fair will find
But only votaries a few at Court.
Unless my duty calls me to remain,
I would from your great presence now withdraw.

Minervinia. You are at liberty to go.

Helena. Thanks, your Highness. [Exit.

Minervinia. I fear that what she says is but too true,
So low is woman's level sunk below,
In her misguided state,
To elevate, it is quite hard and slow.
But, to promote the women at our Court,
Shall we exert our utmost strength and will.
What my exertions feeble can perform,
I shall extend a fairer morn to see.

Enter MESSENGER.

Messenger. Most humbly do I greet your royal self.
I am despatched from our great Emperor,
This packet to deliver.

Minervinia. A message from my lord!
Give it me.

(*Reading.*) "Beloved wife and Empress, mother too,
(Now these three titles all are yours,)
The scenes of carnage we have left for home.
The messenger precedes us but a little league.
Of our return, I send thee thus the news,
That needed preparations can be made.

Dear wife and mother, soon shall we now meet,
And with a loving kiss we thee do greet."
Are they so near unto our city gates?
This news is joyous truly.
I'll in, and hasty preparation make,
For my dear lord's and husband's sake.

SCENE SECOND.

Exterior of the Palace.

Enter CONSTANTINE, DALMATIUS, MAXIMIN, *followed by soldiers, women, and other slaves, Arabian steeds, etc. Flourish of trumpets, drums, etc.*

Constantine. At last, from labor hard, and danger too,
Have we returned from war,
Our heads with Vict'ry's laurelled chaplets wreathed.
Where dark, tempest'ous doubt was seen,
Assurance radiant now does beam.
Our throne, which, like frail towers built on sand,
Did totter from its weakly base,
Does now, like Chian's wall, substantial stand.
Our noisome foes are silenced all,
As are the sacrificéd children on
The banks of the Euphrates' shores.
We now will lay aside the engines grim
Of war most bloody,
And deck ourselves with stately robes of peace,—
Instead of planning sieges hard,
And marches ordering,
Use strategy also to quell our foes,
We will our force and labor now extend
Fair justice to administer at home.
In our domestic bosom we will live,
And chalice drink of our domestic joy.
Our soldiers have right well their province held,
Disheartened not in dubious times,
Nor made with exultation drunk
When Fortune smiled.
Our officers were then most brave and true,
For which receive our fulsome thanks.

Dalmatius. Our Emp'ror great and gen'ral glorious,
We humbly thank you for your kindly praise.
How joyous 'tis to see this harmony
In camp! No mutinous seditions there,
To mar the front so fair of martial life.
Great station, fame besides, are naught of worth
Within themselves; who deem them great are sure
Minutely vain.
To humbly take from Mother Nature fair
Her proffered gift, and nobly it maintain,
Is honor's summit.
For each to take his proper station,
As do the glitt'ring orbs above,
Is truly beautiful.

Constantine. Your words, most kind Dalmatius, are unto
Our ears a most delicious pabulum.
Now may we thus continue, as the bees,
Who give their all unto the gen'ral store.
As persevering spider clings unto
His web, so we have to our duties held.
No dawdlers half can such results attain.
This blood of ours has flown through the
Ancestral river many, many years.
From this time forth, most just Dalmatius,
Thou art a proud patrician.

Dalmatius. I thank you for your condescension, sire.
(*Aside*). What! nothing but that hollow nutshell of
A favor! For this insult I do hate
Him but the more. If it had been the post
(Which rings with gold) of Prefect great,
His ruin none the harder now should I
Pursue than had been past determined;
But now Satanic energies of mine
Shall be redoubled.
(*Aloud*). But see where comes our Empress.

Enter MINERVINIA with train.

Empress (embracing Constantine). Beloved lord and husband
good, it cheers
My heart to look upon thy face again.

The parting has seemed long.
Most heavily do drag our hours
When dear ones are away ; but, when with us,
They fly like wingéd Light.
How fares our son ?

Constantine. Quite well and hardy, dearest love.
But that alone were shame : he has acquit
Himself with honor.
By his brave deeds, he showed himself unlike
A bastard boy.

Dalmatius (aside). By his brave deeds ! But those brave
deeds shall work
His ruin, as those of
Th' intrepid shepherd wild, who seeks for nests at cliffy
Heights, in Northern isles.

Constantine. You will forgive our son, who hastens now
His love so fondly to embrace.
You may think he neglects your love ;
But retrospective glance will show to you
That I, long years departed, was the same.
We bring to you the trophies of our work.

(*Pointing to prizes of women, slaves, etc.*)

The garments Persian, made of goats-hair fine,
Of fabrics rich and rare ;
And ointments superfine, in perfume rich,
Contained in alabaster boxes,
Which are superbly made and pearly white ;
The glowing women in seraglios found ;
Arabian steeds, and Indian jugglers strange,
Whose necromancy followers will please ;
Rare stones, within Caabah found, bring we ;
The copy of the altar great which sealed
The bond between Great God and Adam old,
The prototype of which in Heaven is ;
Of infidelic altars and vile rites,
And censers with their superstitious flame.
(*Turning to Dalmatius.*) The Cappadocian temple so profane,
Which at Comana is, will we suppress,
Idolatrously worshipping a flame.
The evil power destroyed must be,
And truth be shown unto the people all,

That good iconoclasts may they become,
And error may be ended.
For neither Jove nor fiery flame
Shall pious genuflection cause again,
But only holy incarnation true
Of Mighty God, beloved Jesus Christ.
Unto our people good he shall be known,
As when on this our earth he was ;
Not represented black, instead of white,
As men full of design have made him look.
We will disseminate the faith by sword
Throughout the world, from East to West,
Thus elevating man to standard true.
I have adopted Christianity
Because of precepts pure and good,
And as the emblem so divine, the cross,
Appeared to me in sky afar, bearing
This inspiring motto (*pointing to banner*).
“ By this, conquer ; ” which successful omen
Has proved true.
May diff’rent creeds, the which, if true,
To same goal point, be joined in an
Interpretation simple of the words
Of our great Master !
When at great Nécia’s Council I did sit
That end t’ obtain, I tried right hard indeed,
With some success, I ween.
Submissive will with us should e’er prevail ;
For, of ourselves, sure nothing we can do :
O’erspreading star of destiny, it hangs
About us all. We come to this our stage
Without our own consent ; and exit, too,
We must.
And yet a level higher far there is
Than great religion shows. That for a wound
Is but a cataplasm ; while there is
An health of soul which ne’er knew ill.
Our growing light should teach a part of those
Among us the value great
Of true religion : not deem a mere
Communicant, if e’er so faulty,

A candidate most fit for heaven pure ;
Whereas a saint, if he be not unto
Their superstition joined, is deemed by them
As lost. We'll in, and banquet to
Our victory. [*All exeunt except DALMATIUS and MAXIMIN.*

Dalmatius (aside). Go, detested tyrant, to thy lair !
Your present downy bed shall be, ere long,
Changed to thorny nettles.

(Aloud). How now, my comrade valiant? Why look
You wan and sad,
And sighing like a cooing pigeon for
Its mate? Why are you not, like all of us,
Now full of glee, as are the kittens gay
Before a sunny cabin's door?

For you have had your share of purple fame.

(Aside). A splinter from a tumble got while in
Retreat.

(Aloud). Right joyful you should be. But why do I
So vaguely parley thus? I know
Your secret, dreaming turtle : you are
In love.

Maximin. How know you that?

Dalmatius. Think you I have not eyes? Mad, lovers grow ;
Besides, they have a lack of care ; profusely then
Do drop their golden words, as dew does fall
Upon the grass. Right on the earthy floor
Of army tent, I found these lines,
A sonnet, compared with which the lyrics
Of Pindar are but doggerel rhyme (*takes paper and reads*) :

“ My love, to thee I sing most fair and sweet,
Which joyous now upon thine ears will ring.
Remember you those days when we did greet,—
When we upon the floor did sit and sing,
And as, through Summer's burning, weary heats,
Were we there tasting sweets so nice and fine?
Do think of breast in which sad heart now beats !
To state of man I do myself consign.
And now it is, I know, of course more fit,
As I do sit, for other thoughts to sink.
Upon the Prince, alas ! thy smile doth sit,

Because he's richer far than I, you think.
And now I must full sure my suit go o'er,
Unless I give to thee of something more."

(*Aside*). An idiot, with brain most weak and slight,
Far better rhymes could to her beauty write.

(*Aloud*). And now, without this foolish banter,
On solid ground sincere we now will stand.

The passion great of love is

Of so divine a birth, and so transforms

The souls most high on whom it falls, that, when

Comparing altered friend with what he was,

Our mirthful feelings are aroused.

That, from a fellow-soldier you will sure

Forgive. But change your tone of love ;

Let not despondency, so chill, damp

Thine hopes ; but daringly obtain

The object of your choice.

What ! you, a poet heavenly-inspired,

And gen'ral great, give way ?

Oh, no ! thy rival far inferior

Is to you.

'Tis true he power holds, and station too ;

But they most trivial are, compared with that

Fine genius which you possess.

As objects glittering and bright, which shine,

They momentarily do glare, amaze

As well beholder's eyes with wonder great,

But circumspection closer prove to be

But dross. His fame him mighty makes,

But your attractive presence soon could that

O'erweigh. Be always, as her lap-dog true

And faithful, by her side. You must succeed.

Maximin. By Jove ! I'll take right quickly this advice
Of thine. Most true it is that I am great.

I will unto her beauty rhyme, and deeds

Most valorous relate. They will, they must,

Affect her. Now I will go at once.

[*Exit.*

Dalmatius. Go, thou idiotic dupe most dull,

The instrument on which I play so oft !

How eagerly he swallows frothy bowl

Of flattery ! He is as rank a coward
As ere took camelopard's legs at fight,
And as for brain, if rolled into a globe-
Like mass, a pea's circumference would it outdo.
Kindness fair I do affect, for men
Unto my toils it does entrap most sure.
Professing charity, I win them all
To me. Asserting, outwardly, contempt
For wealth, this spongy Maximin
I squeeze of his.

Whilst I pretend the chastity so great
Of pure Lucrece, I really am a sinner
In that kind. And learning, too, which is despised by me,
I do assert I am enamored of.
Religion oft is dallied high in alt,
More surely to o'ercome unwary dames.
I am a friend to man ; but, if I had
The power, benefits which they'd receive
Would then be seen.

My present proud superiors now would
I level to the dust.
Enough of such excrescences. Now to
My own estate. Accursed be Fate !
What unpropitious demon hovered o'er
My cradle young, that I am forced to hold
A post so low ?

In age, experience as well, I'm more
By far than is the Prince, yet by stern Fate
Compelled to fag most insubordinate.
The woman, too, that I would wed with joy,
Is taken from me now by pompous power.
The fair Theodosia I do love right well.
Her charms my passion would amply
Satisfy. What Fate denies, I shall
By circumspection powerful obtain ;
For this my hate transcends all fear.
I have observed (or my
Suspicious fancy sees that which does not
Exist at all) a cast of jealousy come o'er
The Emp'rор's visage grim, like clouds upon
The sun, when men did lavish praise upon

His boy. This flame is now minute,
But fuel I will pour upon the fire,
Until it will destroy him quite.
His jealousy I will arouse, until
He frantically perpetrates a deed
Most direful and black. Now I will go
And set this deed afoot. On this myself,
So diabolical, I will alone
Rely, and by great villany obtain
What niggard Nature does deny.

[Exit.]

Enter CRISPUS and THEODOSIA.

Crispus. Ah! what delights are these! Who would not
stem
The battle's boisterous tide, if, when on land,
There were a shrine so sweet?

Theodosia. Ah, yes, my dearest love. How have I pined
For thee! As when I thought your life exposed
To danger, such as you have seen,
That thou, the life of my life, should be
Where, as told of by my nurse, would cause
My tender blood to freeze with fright.
For consolation, then, I'd seek the stars;
With their illumined splendors hold discourse;
The beaming moon, as t'were thy loving heart,
Would seem to breathe upon me comfort.

Crispus. And you have never distant been from thoughts
Of mine. On duty, lone, or with
My revelling companions of the field,
Or at the battle's zenith, bright and fair,
Where Constantine, my noble sire, did shine
With sun-like splendor, something still unto
Me whispered, "Theodosia."
And at the closing hour of day, when bright
Illumined sphere did sink from view,
As falls a nobly laurelled king into
His grave, I breathed a most beseeching prayer
That it would be my messenger to thee.
(Kissing her). E'en as the butterfly refreshes it
Upon the luscious flower, so do I
Upon thy lips.

The lustre so ethereal of these thine eyes,
Which glitter as the sun upon the wave,
And breathing dearness sweet at ev'ry glance,
Now wins me most to thee.

The grass is greener still by thy fair tread ;
Celestial flowers, too, are sweeter from
Thy gaze ; the breeze more light from waving now
Those goddess tresses fair.

The play of lips so sweet much ecstasy
Doth give. It thrills me to the heart, love.
Thy plushy mantled cheek is rich as peach
Most ripe. The color comes and goes as does
The lightning in a cloud.

Thou art my day, my night, my all ; when I
Do gaze on thee, my heart doth heave with deep
Emotion, like the sea.

Our souls are as Æolian harps ;
And Love on seraphs' wings doth lift us to
The skies. Unto bright angels we are changed.
May fierce tornado black of jealousy
Ne'er sweep o'er this our palace peaceful.

Theodosia. The gods from that defend us.

Crispus. Now, I assure my gem of life
The misery of pent-up love is great ;
The longing for affection cuts into
The heart ; like as a rushing torrent fierce,
Doth batter at the sluice-gates stoutly ; and,
Imploring to be freed, the inward part
Does suffer when a passion feeling
Unable then requital sweet to find.
Seraphic melody of love had long
While slumbered in my heart.

I had despaired of ever surging it
All forth on earth, and yearned to call thee mine,
Before I went to field of carnage.

Theodosia. Dear Crispus, I repent my coquetry
Of old. Your generous laudation of
My charms aroused the spark of vanity
Within. But apathy most wise did bring me then
Quite humbly to your feet.

Crispus. That coldness I did feign, for our so mutual felicity
Was unto me a cross.

Theodosia. Ah, yes, sweet portion of my heart, it must
Have been. However, dearest, you do know
That adulation great does pall.

This can be said, to palliate the case.

Crispus. My love, it can. Impediments like this
Show us that many pits are in the plain
Of love. With life's hard battle over now,
How sweet the joy the mountain shrine of peace
To find!

Theodosia. Most true it is, what thou dost say.
How charming is the night! Dost mark the moon,
So big, and lazy too, with her fair sheen
Effulgent, rising from behind the trees
So verdant? Clouds surround it all, as leaves
A lily.

Crispus. Most charming, it is true. The worship of
This goddess, Nature, natal is unto
Our souls.

Theodosia. Now tenderly in peace we'll live.
Oh, love, when shall the holy bond
Of wedlock us pronounce as one?

Crispus. I hope it will be soon.
But when it suits my partner, it
Shall be. For I am but your slave; if you
Command, I will, as soldier true,
Of lower rank, obey his officer
Superior.

Theodosia. It shall be soon.

Crispus. Now come, we will away, and all
Our trivialities dismiss; for what
Are these to us, who live in heavenly bliss!

ACT II.

SCENE FIRST.

A Hall in the Palace.

Enter CONSTANTINE, *in robes of state, followed by* DALMATIUS, EUSEBIUS, *ministers, chamberlains, eunuchs, etc. They all bow with great reverence. The ministers approach, and hand papers to* CONSTANTINE.

First Minister. This word, so please your august Majesty, Doth come from Britain far.

Second Minister. And this, great Master, comes from Dacia.

Third Minister. From Egypt, great Augustus, this arrives.

Constantine (takes papers). (*To Dalmatius*). My good and trusty officer, were my Commands obeyed?

Dalmatius. They were, my liege.

Constantine. Has that same tax now been repealed, By which so many subjects poor Were beggared?

Dalmatius. It has, my lord.

Constantine. I slept not well when in my ears the cries, Beseeching, of oppresséd multitudes Did ring. My heart, like snow beneath the sun, Did melt with pity. Then they, poor souls, Would piteously kill their offspring dear, Than they should pangs of want endure, that it Had been their lot so hard to feel.

Oh! monarchs not in pompous revel Should pass their days, but, as the pilots good And faithful, guide their ship of state From dangerous shoals.

Dalmatius, see that in the army A rigid discipline is kept, And not in peace effeminate decline. A country formed without trained soldiers Is like an armless giant,

Or Sampson shorn of hair, exposed to bad
Revolts domestic, and incursions from
Afar. All city justice see
Maintained ; that justice be no longer bought
And sold ; nor judges who are perfidious
To mar their benches, passing, as they may.
A careless sentence or unjust :
Advisers selfish, too, the juries then
O'erbear by sophistry invidious,
And thus make righteous, same as guilty, bleed,
And there subvert the sacred name of Justice ;
For, as the gods have ever pictured her,
She shall continue blind.
In East afar, our second capital
Does rear its lofty head.
Byzantium's aged form have we
Rejuvenated. Palaces have
We built, the towers high erected,
And Navigation's drooping head
Have we now lifted up.
On Euxine's inky sea she there does stand
Imperious, like monarch powerful,
His troubled land surveying. Our
Twin thrones, united, are controllers of
The world. All now are stools beneath our feet.
The children of the world
Are now the followers of great Æneas,
And all of this our Empire vast, from Thames
To the Euphrates' shores, is in a sure
Subjection to our power. Dalmatius, you
Do know that Nature fair hath richly blessed
This place by its good situation.
This Constantinople shall be
Eternal monument of this
Our greatness. The Golden Horn of the
Bosphorous is the most grand receptacle
For commerce in all the world. This harbor good
The haven is for myriads of crafts,
And riches of the world deposit there
Themselves. All the art the world contains
Shall now be ours. Good Eusebins, in our

[*Looking off.*]

Great Eastern capital
We you select to do
Our sacred bidding.

Eusebius. I am your trusty subject ever.
There I will serve you at my best.

Constantine. My friend, why art thou thus content? You are
Obscure and full of poverty, compared with those
About us.

Eusebius. If I can get your Highness' pardon, in rhymes
Most poor will I relate the tale of life.
I have so pondered it, that in my mind
It hath assumed a rhythmic form.

Constantine. Say on, your Holiness.

Eusebius. "It so doth seem unto vain man,
The wise, howe'er much wealth can scan,
In man's dull life no joy I see.
With Nature grand love I to be.
My gracious sire, I will relate
What chance brought me unto this state.
In youth, to maiden fair I came.
As roses twin, were we the same.
Alas! so hard was then my fate!
As leaf she fell to frosty state.
Left thus alone myself I found,
And bowed with sorrow to the grave.
The cloistered cell and fair retreat,
Most holy, sacred, did I seek.
I gloomy was, until, one day,
As angels' eyes gave me their ray,
Had sent a likeness, fair as life,
To cheer my way and quell my strife.
For most sweet boy did I then find,
Exact her counterpart in mind.
As seen a kernel in the ear,
A sister bud did it then peer.
I begged him soon to be mine own.
He has as Venus on me shone.
I teach him wisdom clear to see,
And burning lamp in church he'll be.
When Spring doth all her beauty tell,
On mountains high, in cave, we dwell.

On couch, o'er which the bear-skins peep,
We tomb ourselves in grave of sleep.
All goodness is where we do rest.
No frightful dreams our pillows test.
From mountains far do we espy
Brave eagles soar along the sky.
A longing infinite does flow
To pass beyond where they can go.
A glowing hope inspires my breast
When Matter's engine is at rest ;
When life's light 's out, my soul on high
Will soar above where bird doth fly.
Not treasures earthly, you do see,
Are formed to make us happy be."

Constantine (aside). Thus God doth speak through gifted men.

(Aloud). Your picture is most fair indeed.
Now go, thou good and trusty servant.
Thou of our church the crowning point and head
Shall be.

[*Bell rings.*

Eusebius. Yon bell melodious
To vesper summons me. Great master, I thus
Do leave thine august presence.

[*Exit.*

Constantine (aside). Now, how much happier is this poor man
Than I, in my estate so high !

Of no man is he jealous. Earthly things
Do not engross his thoughts. He dwells in heaven,
While yet on earth. Oh that I had a part
Of his serenity of mind ! Now I
Would barter all my Empire for his peace
Of soul. Unthinking multitudes would call
Me Esau, fool ; it then would be right well,
For he is full of love
And human kindness, whilst I make war
Upon my offspring dear.

(Aloud). Now go and see that my injunctions are
Enforced.

Dalmatius. I go, my lord.

Constantine (alone). Now Justice will her balmy breath extend
Around our land, and Peace and Plenty smile.
Is it by Fate decreed that this our cup

Should not be clear? That with our nectar
Some taints of wormwood must be mixed?
Within the mansion of my heart, there is
A room where vile things rest;
Where ranc'rous jealousy infects the air which lies
Adjacent, and renders close
Proximity loathsome and vile.
It will, I fear, transmit itself
To other quarters, and crumble down
The dwelling fair into a dusty ruin.
When young, bright Hope did cheer my path.
Then, conscious of a kingly mind, I strove
My God-born function to maintain, and have,
By perseverance, reached the end for which
I aimed; exposed myself to battle's shocks,
There, where at best uncertainty remained.
Not for ambition merely have I worked,
But for my people's happiness and peace.
The wheel of fortune ever hath in my
Own favor turned. And, when I saw the haven
Appear by life's so stormy ocean,
An om'nous shadow did appear,
To dash me back again. My son, my boy, —
Yes, he whose growing progress swift I watched,
And loved so tenderly;
Whose deeds of valor
Did me assure I lived again in him.
That noble heir of mine would then
Maintain my power when I had fled.
But then, on that fair day so bright,
There did succeed the blackest night.
My jealous clouds destroyed the sheen of day,
That now, before my death,
Ambition great will tempt him to the seat
Before his time. It must not be.
I'll strive to wipe these things from off my mind.
But yet, without black thoughts, I'll watch
My son;
For watching well, oft will avoid
What somnolent security endures.

[*Exit.*

Enter MAXIMIN.

Maximin. I went unto her house, as he, my friend
Dalmatius, did advise, but coldly was
Received. This man's my friend; he sees my genius,
And farther will advise. Ah! here
He comes.

Enter DALMATIUS.

Dalmatius. What! here alone? How fares your suit?

Maximin. Not well. She deigned me not
An interview.

Dalmatius. You did not stay half long enough.
Your noble importunity must now
Erase the strong impression which is made
By other suitor,
By perseverance bold.

Maximin. Why, so I did. My brain was filled unto
Its brim with lines most amorous.
But, when I did commence to read, she laughed
At them, and bade me quickly close.

Dalmatius. Go to't again: the victories cannot
Be gained at once. Did Virgil please at first?
Were Orpheus' lute or great Apollo's lyre
Esteemed aright when first their heavenly-
Inspired, melodious strains came forth? Ah, no:
Do not believe it. The great, at first,
Are unappreciated. Pursue
Your former strains. Set them to music,
And chant them forth, accompanied by lute,
Beneath her window, at midnight hour,
When the prosaic world is hushed in sleep.
The moon, with most ecstatic joy,
Will oscillate from out her proper zone:
And, if you do not then retard your splend'rous tones,
It will with sister spheres collide, and all
Things render chaos.

Maximin (aside). I am a poet truly,
Or he would not so strongly urge that theme.
(*Aloud*). Now I will take your good advice; for I
Will go this very night.

Dalmatius. So do! And I will wager that she will come
To you enraptured, as a roe doth come
Unto its mate. But do not now permit
Your life's fair drama to consist of scenes
Which are entirely amorous. Fail not
Your presence at the banquet to be held
In honor of his princely Highness.

Maximin. What say you! Banquet of my rival?

Dalmatius. I do perceive that your great parts have lost,
By concentration on this theme,
Their versatility. You should
Recover now your caution, as
Of old. If you absent yourself at will
From an occasion great, important too,
As this will be, would sure attend on you
A great suspicion. I shall hold a seat
At that grand nuptial feast; not out of love
And duty just to Crispus,
But for a cause like yours.

Maximin. Do you oppose him, then?

Dalmatius. I do. Cannot you now see why? We aren't
The torpid things which are
Not galled by arrogance of those we deem our equals,
And suffer calmly
From saucy Fortune's humorous caprice.
I hate him for his place, and, still more yet,
That Constantine, his partial father,
Who by conceit is almost now devoured,
Created by his accidental, slight
Successes. His mental power is not
Of greater form than ours, and I would drag
Them down to hell. So we are really
Now aiming at one mark. Two heads than one
Much better are. We, then, most friendly will
Unite, and our great end
Accomplish quite. Now come, the hour for
The fête has now arrived. We will now go on
Together, and, as we walk,
We'll make our plans the surer.
The feast is most important. You will
Most deeply sure regret if you
Untimely do forget.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE SECOND.

*A Street in Rome.**Enter DALMATIUS AND MAXIMIN.*

Dalmatius (*pointing off*). Behold the palace of the Prince.
Now he, a foolish man, unknowing of
His fate, does deem himself secure.
But we are Sybils, who do read quite clear
The coming page of his life's book.

Maximin. We are so, it is true. Full sure within
Artistic circle, I cannot fail
At apex point to be. Among
Musicians, although the choicest souls
In Rome will be collected there, I will
Not be a second small to any one.

Dalmatius. No more you will, sweet Amphion. For you
Will move the stones of Rome, as did your great
Progenitor, of Thebes.

Maximin. At this same feast, I'll be the swan-like neck ;
The rest will be but body common, tail
As well. The Prince himself is body too,
Base body small ; a soldier is naught else.

Dalmatius. Then you do make oblation low unto
Apollo rather than to Mars.

(*Aside*). What concentration of conceit ! If the
Great purposes of Nature had been
Completed, he would have been a slave ;
Yet he does hold in his contempt the trade
Which is the noblest in the cycle of
The world.

Maximin. Of music I am so much enamored
That I am wedded to my lute.
I fear that I am dissolute, by thus
Pursuing two fair mistresses.

Dalmatius. Now have a care, or you'll be held
For bigamy.

Maximin. Come, we will enter now the palace hall,
Where we shall see those slayers base of men,

The clods of earth. I am
A sweet etherial poet.

(*Pointing to head*). I have within this sphere what they, the best
Of them, have not.

Dalmatius (*aside*). Aye, verily : a vast amount of great
Stupidity, which heaven defend them from.

(*Aloud*). Ah, here we are at last. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE THIRD.

An Apartment in the Palace of Crispus.

*A festal table in the centre, around which are seated CRISPUS
(in centre), DALMATIUS, MAXIMIN, soldiers, noblemen, retainers,
etc., etc.*

Dalmatius (*rises*). My fellow-soldiers, we here congratulate
our Prince

(The youthful Cæsar) on his expected joy.

He is our brave and second head ;

Our dear, beloved companion, who, at

Yon Adrianople, did assist his

Great father, who slew some thousands of

The enemy. His noble son performed

No less a feat there with Licinius ;

And when the civil war with its

Fraternal horror raged, and when our brave

And noble leaders each did take a part

Most dangerous, unparagoned there was

The valor seen, when younger chief of ours

Did force the Helles' wave, defended by

Our enemy Licinius. How like

Fierce tigers they did spring upon their foes,

And carry all before ! Our troops

Their heroism did cheer, who strove themselves

To make more worthy of such masters.

The welkin then did ring with shouts of praise,

When victory was there proclaimed. And now,

When he's returned, how fitting 'tis for our

Loved lord to lead a daughter fair of this

Our land unto an altar twined

With festoons of a conqueror !

Let us carouse unto our Prince's health,
Prosperity besides.

(*Aside*). Such toasts as this shall work his ruin.

Crispus. My friends, from you comes honor in
Repletion for my duty in the warlike field.

How noble were those scenes! —

The foe's announcement; our bustling preparations;

The cry to horse; the stately chargers,

Elegantly caparisoned, their fiery eyes peering out,

Pawing, snorting, impatient for their work;

The tramp to charge, and gallop's exhilaration;

Our crested helms upon our heads,

And bulwark bucklers on our arms;

And trusty falchions in our hands, —

Like madmen rushed we on the foe!

Saw them beneath our valor quake, —

On their retreat, to follow them

Like wildfire o'er the heath,

Along fair roads, and by great palaces,

And landscaped parks,

Through cornfields rich and meadows green,

Great rivers ford, glittering

In noonday sun.

And, after enemies' great rout, returned,

The silv'ry armor shining brightly in

The sun.

Dalmatius. E'en so, and our great conquests foreign.

The king lay cringing at our feet

At last, his harems gone, and his

Fair, hooded beauties (peeping through

Their veils, as does the moon through clouds

On hazy nights, and calling us their lords), and our

Great Cæsar's prowess 'gainst the Allemand hordes.

Crispus. Now come, we'll make an offering

To festive Bacchus, and not to brute

Silenus drink. Ah, yes, my friends,

There glory was indeed! Now it is meet

That e'en at this grand time

The mem'ry holds our noble father; he did found

Our triumphs all.

I ne'er saw man approach ideal great
Of gen'ral as my father does.
Upon a long and tedious march, when men
Would from exhaustion fall, although he was
Then suffering, with his stout heart would bid
Them dawning hope to take. No beaut'ous queen
Could Cæsar-like draw him from his
Great trust; unsuccessful fight could not,
Or future prospect gloomy, shake his own
Firm hope.

Dalmatius. 'Tis true, most worthy Prince. Here 's to our land's
Great Emperor and master. (*Aside*). This from him
A secret shall be kept.

Crispus. Sweet Virtue should forever reign, and not
Permit base idleness and vice to run
Their poisonous spear-heads through our social flesh,
Resembling the so-called Aristos great
Of other times and nations. But without
Vile superstition we'll buckle to the path of life
Most nobly.

Dalmatius. Most true it is, my lord.
(*Aside to Maximin*). How virtuous he is! We nod assent,
But not to it subscribe. Ah, no!
Fair women, wine also for us, my boon
Companion gay. Is it not so?
Rich pleasure doth on our escutcheons sit;
The conquests are for our amusement.

Crispus. The cruel and ungrateful
Licinius requited was at that
Great time by running swift along the chain
Of failures.

Maximin (to Dalmatius). This banquet is a great one.

Crispus. Come, friends, now let good-humor gloss the festal
scene.

Maximin (to Crispus). Here, by your Highness' leave,
I'll make a philosophical remark.

Crispus. You have it, Maximin.

Maximin. We are something now, but once were oysters.

Crispus. Believe you so? (*Aside*.) And, judging here from your
Capacity of mind (which is of a
Decidedly moluscal character),
You have but made small progress since.

Maximin. I once was but a monkey.

Dalmatius (aside). And still do answer to that name.

Maximin. We are progressing even now.

Crispus (aside). There is much room for it.

Maximin. We came from something very small, so slight,
Infinitesimal it was, that it
Was hardly anything.

Crispus (aside). You did most certainly, for nothing comes
From nothing.

Maximin. We are but clay.

Crispus (aside). And yours is of the poorest quality.

Maximin. We perish like the beasts within the field.

Crispus (aside). You live like one. This fellow shall be
known

Unto my royal sire, for his diversion.

(*Aloud*). Now, Maximin, I fear

That you the wine have tipped but too oft.

The lobster-color of your cheeks is like

The ruby.

Dalmatius. 'Tis true, your Highness ; that 's because he is
A poet. For his inspiration it
Is needed.

Crispus. Does he, besides, ride Pegasus?
It is much needed truly, as
Ethereal high spirits, as our friend,
Do scale the great Empyrean.

Maximin (seriously). My royal master flatters me.

Crispus. Such genius does much adorn
The pyramid of this our nation.

Maximin. You greatly condescend, your Highness.

Crispus. He is of course a lover ;
A poet always is. Who is
The favored dame? Is she colossal, or but
Diminutive? Which? Corpulent,
Or of a slender form? In rich,
Young adolescence fresh, or matronly
In age? Her face, — is it an ugly one,
Or beautiful? For poets' tastes sure are
Most various.

Maximin (aside). He little does suspect to whom I am
Devoted.

Dalmatius (aside to Maximin). He would not be so bantering
If he did know that you were his
Great rival,

Whose genius does weigh against his power.

Maximin. I think so, too.

Crispus. We'll toast her now, whoe'er she be.

(*They drink.*)

Dalmatius. With all my heart!

Maximin. With all my heart!

Dalmatius (to Maximin). If he knew all, he would not be so
gay.

Crispus (to Maximin). Did inspiration cause yourself to be
Intoxicated, when I saw you wild
The other night?

Maximin. May it please your Royal Highness,
The states identical are, always, with
A poet Madness is his beauty.

Crispus. Indeed! Your beauty, then, with Homer's mind
Competes; Apollo's form besides.

Come, friends, this is to the combined great Homer and
Apollo too. A Janus truly there:

Fair Beauty one way looks, and Mind does glance
The other.

It emulates great Argus keen, himself.

To our divine Prometheus, who stole

The sacred fire from heaven, for our behoof. (*They drink.*)

Dalmatius (to Maximin). Does not this banter drive you to
revenge?

Maximin. It is not banter. You suspect always
Intents most evil; something find, also,
Nefarious in ev'ry action. I,
Upon the other hand, am far more free
And open.

Dalmatius (aside). "More free and open," yes, as is a
gaping pig,
Who swallows all the flies of ribaldry.

(*Aloud.*) Our rhymers deem the trade of arms beneath
His elevation, your Royal Highness.

Maximin (to Dalmatius). Oh, hush! Do not say that. Their
ire you'll rouse
Against me.

Dalmatius. And if I do, my hero bold?
What is that to you?

Crispus. Ah! he despises it, does he?
(*Aside*). The coxcomb! with all that's useful, I
Suspect. (*Aloud*). Of course we can't appreciate
His feelings.

Maximin. Your greatness truly does appreciate
A poet. (*They laugh.*) Your Royal Highness is
One in reality; the quality
Poetical is seen so soon by you
In other men.

Besides, your Highness is an Adonis, and of course
Can beauty understand.

Crispus. Of course. Belief tells me there is, unto
The poet, food to nurture his great muse
On ev'ry hand. Nay, even in the dull
And stony pavements of a street!
Is this not true?

Maximin. It is, so please your worshipful and most
Great Highness. Our royal Prince is e'en
Most gracious thus to cast his favor on
Us all, my comrades.

Crispus (aside). Ah, what a sycophant!

Maximin. He's not exalted by his station high.
How much the culture of his Majesty
Has done unto himself and us as well!
His gracious Majesty, the great and strong
Augustus, noble sire of ours, your father ——

Crispus (aside). How many more so venal links will he
Now add to that long chain of flattery? ——

Maximin. Most worthy is to be the father of
A son like this.

Crispus (mockingly). Disinterested subject, many thanks.

Maximin. Your young, affianced wife besides, the fair,
Sweet Theodosia, is
A noble Roman Princess.

Crispus. Such comment from a judge of
The fair sex is highly gratifying.

Dalmatius. So please your Royal Highness, our friend
Is multifarious in his
Accomplishments.

To Orpheus he makes oblation
As well as to Apollo.

Crispus. You sacred muses! The gods do highly favor us.
Wilt thou rejoice our ears,
By causing them to now remove from their
Strong fastnesses, by your so dulcet tones?

Maximin. You do me too much honor, Prince.

Crispus. What say you?

Maximin. I would, my lord. Mischance, alas! did keep
My instrument at home.

Crispus. Defects like that can soon be remedied.
What ho there, Seneschal!

Enter SENESCHAL.

Seneschal. What is your Highness' will?

Crispus. Go summon court musicians, with their lutes,
Before us.

Maximin (*disconcerted*). My lord! my lord!

Crispus. What say'st thou, great one?

Maximin. So please your Highness, custom hath wrought
Its power so on me, I dare attempt
A tune upon no other instrument
Except my own.

Dalmatius (*aside*). A cowardly excuse.

Crispus (*to guests*). Shall we now list unto this melody
Most glorious?

All. Aye, aye, my lord, we will!

Crispus. Then to your house I'll send in search of the
So favored organ, of such
Celestial make.

Maximin. Nay, nay, my noble lord!

All. Oh, certainly! The tune, the tune!

Maximin. Then, if it is as you do say, I must consent.

Crispus (*to Seneschal*). With haste despatch thee to our
Maximin's house,

And bring unto this place his favored lute.

Maximin. 'Tis favored you may say, right well,
Your Royal Highness. Its strings are of
The finest texture. It is of gold,
Inlaid with mother rich of pearl.

The keys are diamonds. The tone is sure
Most exquisite. Of a far Persian man,
A troubadour, I bought the instrument,
In Stechiphon, for ten bright thousand coins,
The drachmas called.

Crispus. How wondrous!

Maximin. Your Highness now may well say wondrous.
It is, howe'er, the bowing, which is most
Consummate.

Crispus. The bowing?

Maximin. That is, so please my master great, the light
And gentle undulation, thus, upon
The strings, which causes tone superb.

*(He describes a moving up and down of the wrist, and as if
pressing on the keys with the left hand.)*

Crispus. Now, that you call the bowing?

Maximin. It is, my lord. And, when I was
In Stechiphon, musicians told me there
They ne'er had list to my compeer.

Dalmatius (aside). What a mendacious braggart!

Maximin. I did not care to stay there long, howe'er,
The sun, so very hot, was always felt
When at me-ri-di-an.

Crispus (affectedly). What an effect delightful that must give!
Impatience makes me writhe with agony,
Thus being kept from strains like that so long.
Haste, slave! step faster!

*(Crispus takes lute, looks at it with affected amazement, then
hands it to the rest, who are similarly affected.)*

Now haste, my friends. How fitting 'tis to have
The cream of music sweet poured forth by our
Great Homer and Apollo too!
Another leaf is here to be put in
To that fair laurel wreath,—that of the great,
Divinely gifted Orpheus.
Stand forth, great Maximin, into our midst.

(MAXIMIN comes out, full of vanity.)

Dalmatius Doth mark, your Highness, now, his long, light
hair?

See how majestically it falls
Behind! There is sweet melody, I'm sure,

In ev'ry capillary ; and the fair,
Poetical-like pallor of
His classical countenance.

Crispus. Bring forth that laurel wreath.

(Servant brings out a mock wreath ; Crispus puts it on Maximin's head.)

Great merit thus receives its high reward.
Much glory to our sublime,
Great Homer-Orpheus,
Apollo too. Here ! hail to thee, and three
Times hail !

(The guests rise, and mockingly bow as they pass by him.

They say several times, "Hail !" They place themselves in positions of mock adoration. Maximin commences to play, after much affectation of the bowing movement. He makes very inharmonious noises. Those whom he cannot see, make faces of distress, and put fingers in their ears.)

Dalmatius (aside). It is as dissonant as is a cur
When barking near our doors.

Crispus (aside). Or like a comb when played by children.
(When Maximin is done). Sublime it truly is ! Enough of
this.

For your kind wishes towards your Prince, I thank
You all. But now, as hour is late, and much
Loud wassail doth distemper man, I deem
It meet we close.

Maximin. 'Tis true, much wassail doth distemper man :
For out of all the horrors that do come
To us, the misery of dark,
Succeeding morn is greatest.

Crispus. Thou say'st most truly. *(Aside).* Wisdom for
once.

Dalmatius. We are always here but to do your great
And mighty bidding, lord. So now we close,
My champions. Once more, unto our Prince
Most noble, his beauteous bride as well.

(Aside.) That never shall be.

[Exeunt.]

ACT III.

SCENE FIRST.

A Garden near the Palace of Crispus.

Enter CRISPUS and THEODOSIA.

Theodosia. Oh, may this strain of love which fills our hearts
Be everlasting now ! Let us away
From haunts of cold and selfish men, to some
Secluded spot, where, at bright morn, we can
There wander through most verdant meads ;
Cull violets and daisies fair ;
Wild fruit, for our good nourishment, obtain ;
Near by a placid lake, with sheen upon
Its surface fair, find watercresses,
And search for lilies near the bank.
At noon, within the shade of some cool wood,
Where cheery pines
Majestic colonnades do form, and oaks
High tow'ring stand ; where cones
And acorns lie all scattered round ;
The sun,
His ornamental splendors peeping through the trees.
Beneath the shade
Of some fair tree, we'll take our meal, which shall
Consist
Of Nature's unadulterated store. Eventide
Shall see us sail upon
The quiet bosom of the lake, as we do gaze
So lovingly at windows of
Our souls.

Crispus. Ah me ! That would indeed be bliss !
But we have duties to perform.
My trust is great. My father high must I
Assist in his great state,
Large armies lead, and combat hard against
The foe ; my countrymen
Improve, and drink rich knowledge from its fount.

Theodosia. Yes, truly, dearest.

Crispus. Fair one, last night I had a dream.
Methought a room of great magnificence
I saw,—a chamber, the floor of which
Was tessellated bright with gems;
Frescoed roof, of beauty made;
And walls which stately arabesques displayed.
'Twas garnished in a kingly mould.
Upon a testered bed, with canopy
Of silk cerulean, and lace of snow,
Which fell in folds majestic from the high
And coronated summit,—upon
This couch did lie thy lovely form asleep.
The dress was hiding half thy breasts, as does
The earth the sun when at its setting hides.
Thou wert in arms of Morpheus, and hair
Dishevelled was, in graceful folds around
Thy alabaster shoulders falling low.
One beaut'ous arm outside
The coverlid lay. The moon her splend'rous radiance
Was pouring on thy face, and on her beams,
So argente, nymphs and peris danced,—
In glorious harmony sang
Thee peace.

Theodosia. Was it not very beautiful?

Crispus. It was. But not without great sadness, dire
Foreboding too, do I relate it now.

Theodosia. Why so, my love?

Crispus. Why dost thou ask? I, thy life and moiety,
Was not there by thy side. It was as if
I looked at thee from out another sphere.

Theodosia. 'Tis true, it seemed like that indeed.
And, now I think me too, I also had
A dream. We were within a boat upon
The sea. A storm arose, and we were then
Into a fearful vortex blown.
The boat revolved as does
A weather-cock, and then capsized;
Into the deep we fell.
The boisterous washes dashed high. I lost
My sight of you, and soon became unconscious.

Upon recovering, I found myself
Upon the shore. They told me you had died.
I felt as does one lost within a cave ;
My breath almost forsook me ; for thou,
My guide, my stay, my life, had gone,
Whilst I remained, most desolate and lone.
I fear there is dread meaning in
These shadows, as both have seen
The same.

Crispus. It looks most black indeed. But life is like
A fragile sprig, o'erblown at any gust ;
Or like the finite bubbles of a stream,
Which are scarce seen before they are no more.
But, dearest Theodosia, our hearts
Can never die ; for they immortal fire
Contain, with which frail matter
Cannot vie.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE SECOND.

A Street in Rome.

Enter DALMATIUS and MAXIMIN.

Dalmatius. Now, why do you forever thus pursue
This hopeless passion, when
The lovely Helena yearns for your
Endearments?

Maximin. Do you think so?

Dalmatius. Most certainly. (*Looking off.*)
What could be more favorable?
She comes.

Enter HELENA.

Helena (aside). That is the wealthy Maximin.
I much should like to make a conquest there.

Dalmatius. Good day, sweet Daphne.

Maximin. How art thou, fair one?

Helena. Quite well, I thank you both.
(*To Dalmatius, when it is absurd.*) Please pardon me for
passing in front
Of you.

Maximin (aside). How very amiable! Is she,
I wonder, often thus?

Helena (showing her handsome teeth). I went the other eve to
A palatial concert.

The execution of musicians was
Particularly fine.

Maximin. Indeed? But I was not seen there.

Helena. And if you were n't?

Maximin. If I had been, you would have known
What was high music.

Dalmatius (aside). Yes, such as peacocks make.
He struts (his arms now kneading air)
As does a cock.

Maximin (slyly approaching Helena and kissing her). I have
accomplished it.

Helena. You man of impudence! how dare you?

Dalmatius. Do pardon his impetuosity,
My fair one. It is poetic ardor.

Helena. 'Tis great impertinence, I think.

(*Maximin goes to a sofa, and extends himself at full length upon
his stomach.*)

Dalmatius (aside to Helena). Do you behold the alligator?

Helena. Aye, that he is. (*Aside*). Yet he is rich,
And money's what I want.

I will dispose of him right soon.

(*Aloud*). How beautiful you look,
Like Jupiter, who doth on Antiope gaze!

Dalmatius (aside). More like a porpoise eyeing mermaid.
I now must leave this pair of geese;

I have more serious work afoot.

(*Aloud*). Farewell, my Hero. Bye, bye,
Leander. Thou'lt be swimming Tiber broad,
Night after night. Success to you.

[*Exit.*

Maximin. Sweet creature! lips of thine are like
The apple ripe.

(*Aside.*) 'Tis better to take her than go without.

My first fair flower is now beyond my reach;
So I must here content myself with this.

Long deprivation hath made me bold.

I will not further hesitate.

(*Aloud*). Fair Helena, wilt thou be mine?

Helena. Sweet Paris, yes. (*Aside*). For it is well to take
The prize when it is offered, not
Coquettishly to dally, and perchance,
By that means, lose it.

Maximin. Oh, rapture!

Helena. I do consent to your request at once;
For I am not coquettish, like those false,
Deceitful women, anxious then to grant
Their lovers' wishes when negation firm
Does fall from their false lips.

Maximin. Are you sincere?

Helena. I am. I do accept you for
A lifelong lord.

Maximin. 'Tis well. We'll now retire, and live
In harmony. I'll go and make complete
Arrangements for our union.

[*Exit*.]

Helena (*Alone*). Of weak-brained toy, called love, I have
Much heard. But I know not of such mere
Nothings. Howe'er, to wear its semblance fair
'Tis well enough. It is insinuation,
And, being constantly before him, that
Will win him.

All secret, wily arts, that cunning
Woman only does possess, will I
Be sure to use.

I now do see how opportune my own
Accomplishments have been, — playing fine,
And singing, drawing too. I had no love
For things like that when young, and their
Design did not then see at all. But now I do.
'Tis but the training of the bird to catch
The prey. How trembling mute this Maximin is,
While I do all the talking!
But with what secret art I do conceal
My inward spirit of ridicule!
Fair Pleasure is my only idol.

[*Exit*.]

Enter TWO CITIZENS.

First Citizen. Are you going to the Coronation, friend?

Second Citizen. I am.

First Citizen. Our noble ruler, the great Constantine, Is well deserving of this honor done Him.

Second Citizen. 'Tis true, he may be. But, if this were not Proud Rome, or if it were, and was without The circumspect, dread vultures of our Monarch (eavesdropping On ev'ry hand, catching all that falls), one might Say something.

First Citizen. I do not understand this mystery, My friend.

Second Citizen. Hush! What does "tyrant" mean?

First Citizen. "Tyrant"! Why do you apply that vile And most ignoble epithet to our So noble Emperor?

Second Citizen. Because he's taken from us our suffrage. We cast no votes, as did our great And glorious ancestors under the Republic.

First Citizen. Oh, fie, man! Right of voting gave to them No happiness.

It is the equitable conduct of a wise, Great monarch, like our noble Constantine, That makes it well with us, let be his name Emperor, Consul, or What you will.

Are not you governed well?

Second Citizen. I may be governed well; But our great agitators say A man is but a brute without The ballot.

First Citizen. 'Tis brutal of them to say it. Regard them not.

If you do wish to witness truth of my Remark, and backed by actual fact, look At lives of Scipio and Cato Of old republic. They were

Great leaders of their race, formed by powers divine
In wisdom to rule the earth.
Yet, notwithstanding, they were forced (account
Of the absurd and foolish theory
Extant in that old time) to bow, for an
Election, to the base and foolish rabble.
When came defeat (as was
So oft the case, success then showering
Upon the heads of scheming men), to this
Humiliation had they to bow.
In those old days, opinions of people
By demagogues were warped.
By throwing slanders on the great, they
Were wont to give
The foolish men their posts; allowed at the same time
Their great ones, who had served their country
In times of peril, in obscurity
Ignobly to remain.

Second Citizen. It is much better now.

First Citizen. Indeed it is, my friend. Now, merit
Receives its due from this our wise
And justice-meteing sovereign.
In those old days, there was
A most sad lack of reverence
For real greatness.
Come, we will honor give where it is due.

Second Citizen. And that we will. I see my error now.
Come, we will go together. [Exeunt.]

Enter DALMATIUS and MAXIMIN.

Maximin. Now, do you think this marriage
Will please our gracious monarch?

Dalmatius. Why, certainly. (*Aside*). The lion hath of the
Mosquito small no cognizance.

(*A standard-bearer and soldier, with a Crispus medal on
his breast, and ambassadors, cross the stage.*)

Maximin (*pointing to banner*). Ah, ah! they come to
Coronation.
That is our Emperor's renowned banner.

Dalmatius. Indeed!

Maximin. Those are ambassadors, and that
The Crispus medal.

Dalmatius. Ah! (*Aside*). Great boredom, come again.

Maximin (to soldier). Is the procession all in file?

Soldier. It is.

Dalmatius. He does interrogate forever; tells
As well of great exploits.

It would be well if he did know

What meaning lies in reticence.

(*Aloud*). Let's on to Coronation.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE THIRD.

A Square in Rome. At back, the Arch of Constantine.

*Enter CONSTANTINE in rich apparel, with attendants. After
bowing deferentially before him, they retire.*

Constantine (alone). Yes, it must be so!

For I have struggled long within myself

To quell this raging sea, but 'twill not down.

The safety of my throne commands it.

When in strong prison-walls he is immured,

Ambition's shafts will sink into

The ground.

It only is a move of caution

To win life's game.

And not a hair of his fair head shall come

To harm, unless bold desperation prompts

The deed.

This son of mine would take from me my hard

And justly earned fame.

The people show for him too marked

A favor,

For his insinuating manner,

(Or some ingratiating toy); whilst great

Neglect, or forced obeisance,

Are meted out to me,—

Yes, I, whose great achievements gave them all

Their seats.

My Empress makes a greater idol far
Of this her son than of myself her lord.
Fair Theodosia, too, who is betrothed
To him, there has
Respect alone.
Such things shall here no longer be.
I'll nip this growing evil in its bud.
And is it thus he dares to snatch
The honor from my very hands!
I hate the people for their foolish choice!
'Tis also mingled with contempt; for what
Is the so stupid multitude, if they
Prefer this unripe boy to me?
And why forever laud him, too, when I'm
Far richer in desert?
Why need they him regard always, while I
Am here? I was the favored one until
He came; but now my place 's usurped.
Must I, who have hard battered stormy way
Of life for them, but hold a second place?
It shall not be.

(Martial music heard within.)

They come to celebrate my coronation.
Alas! it is
A mockery, with my own son
Estranged.
What are great festals, pageants too, for me,
At this drear time?
Yet I must dress my face in most
Contented shows, for satisfaction of
My subjects.
Alas, how great the lie!
How hard the task light mirth to feign
When heavy are our hearts!
'Tis like a skeleton bedecked with gems,
Within a shrine.

He seats himself on the Curule Chair. The procession enters. It consists of twelve patrician youths, arrayed in scarlet, — six from the most illustrious families, in green

robes,—with banner, bearing the motto, “*By this conquer* ;” a cross on it, and garlands of flowers. A herald. The courtiers wear the Crispus medal on their breasts. Enter EMPRESS MINERVINIA ; CRISPUS and THEODOSIA together ; Ambassadors from India, Ethiopia, and Persia (the latter pay homage to CONSTANTINE, and solicit his favor) ; EUSEBIUS, Archbishop of Cæsarea ; Poet PORPHYRIUS, QUESTOR, DALMATIUS and MAXIMIN, HELENA, courtiers, heralds, etc., etc. They all proceed in front of CONSTANTINE, bow, and pass on. Ambassadors kneel, presenting gifts.

First Ambassador. Behold, great Constantine,
This tribute of our humility
And adoration ; a desire, as well,
For thy continued favor.

Constantine. Thanks, tributaries of the central
River.

Here may it ever, like a peaceful mantle,
Cover thee !

(*Aside.*) I would this mockery were o’er.
I long for the offender’s punishment.
This vanity does grate
Upon my serious soul.

(EUSEBIUS places the crown on CONSTANTINE’s head ; the
Empress takes a lower seat, near the Emperor ; the poet
PORPHYRIUS stands forth with a laurel crown on his head,
and reads the poem.)

“ POEM.

“ The great Augustus of the West,
Of all high Emperors the best,
To thee be glory high and clear,
Upon this twentieth, last year.

“ Thy reign in Gaul was sure most just ;
Maxentius was later crushed ;
At Turin and Verona, too,
Your triumphs there were ever new.

“ At last thy conquests touched great Rome,
Which since hath been thy crowning home.
The last high fête was very grand,
But on this level did not stand.

“ Prosperity and health are shown
As in the Empire thou dost own ;
While Eastern hordes as slaves are sent,
Our own blest land is opulent.

“ And Crispus, who did follow too,
He was in all thy battles through.
We hope ere long twin stems thou’lt be
On this our own great Empire’s tree.”

Constantine (aside). Most goading nettles to my spirit !
Dalmatius (to Maximin). Do you observe the change in
His demeanor?

Maximin. Aye.

“ For many years may you here live,
And forth thy noble ideas give ;
Domestic fraud and foreign thrall
On this great kingdom never fall !

“ Until thy book of life does end,
And when the given path you wend,
May thy life’s sail most tranquil be,
Till closed on Eterne’s peaceful sea !”

Constantine. Now, thanks for this the benediction of
My people.

(Aside). ’Tis tainting poison to my ear.

Dalmatius (aside to Maximin). Do you observe the bad effect
These rhymes most flattering,
(Which are by far excelled by yours,)
Have upon the Emperor?

Maximin. He does not seem to be right joyous,
It is true.

Dalmatius. It is not strange, when we consider
In what antipathy he hold his son.

Maximin. Does he, then, hate him so?

Dalmatius. Yes, my friend, from jealousy.

Maximin. From jealousy?

Dalmatius. Yes. Mark you the frowns which furrow
His brow.

Constantine. Approach now, those to whom, by our
Most gracious favor, the station,
So honorable, of Consul, is awarded.

(Several step forward. They kneel, and he knights them.)

To follow here the humane custom of
The ancient Brutus, I manumit
A slave.

(A slave approaches, kneels, and is freed.)

(Aside). These tedious ceremonies, which
Of old were joys to me, afflict me much.

(Aloud). Most noble Dalmatius, henceforth
Prætorian Prefect be, for faithful
Adherence to our power.

Dalmatius (aside). At last! *(Aloud).* My thanks,
Most gracious lord, for this
Thy double bounty. I trust I may
Deserve the honor.

(Aside). The office shall not be for people's good,
But for my own.

There, to enrich myself, shall I
Take ev'ry chance,
I care not who's defrauded.

Constantine (aside). 'Tis well this mockery is o'er.

(Aloud). Now let the Herald sound.

*(All look with astonishment. Herald sounds his trumpet.
The Questor comes down and reads the warrant.)*

Constantine (to Questor). Now, to thy work!

(Aside). Impatience such as this
I cannot longer bear.

Questor (reading). "Here we, the reigning power of this
Great Empire, find it forced upon
Us (although 't is much against the throbs

Of nature and affections
Of consanguinity), by the
Audacious conduct of our son (who has
Exerted here, through vile
Ambition prompted, to subvert
The reigning favor for his own), to do our duty ;
For which great crime does justice cry aloud
For the base culprit's death.
Yet he who reigns does show more mercy, less
Howe'er of justice, than did Brutus,
The patriot of ancient republic.
Instead of death, so fully merited,
He shall confined in prison be, until
The Royal clemency does choose t' exert
Itself.

(*To Crispus*). To Pola far shalt thou be taken ;
And in those most

Impervious dungeons shalt thou lodge,
Until repentance comes.

Think, O son ! when in your lonely cell,
With soft, repentant heart, of this
Thy sire's clemency."

(*All much amazed.*)

Crispus (*coming down stage*). What do I hear !

What is this ! I know not what I am !

Constantine. Dissemble not, false one ! Naught of bold
Pretence will serve you now.

Your feigning mask, which does like a
Chameleon assume the color which
Occasion fits, my own incisive mind
Cannot deceive. Away with him !

Crispus (*kneeling*). Here, on my knees,
I ask an explanation of this most
Strange affair.

Constantine. To feigned entreaties I am deaf.
This impudent assertion doth excel
Your other deep offence.
The subtle cloud which cleaves the
Arching vault, when it is touched,
But chaotic vapor
Does prove to be, is far more real than is
This innocent assumption.
Away with him !

Empress (advancing). What can this mean, my lord?
Amazement seizes on my very soul!
And what? Our son, our dearest
And only offspring, thus be gyved!
As wife and mother, I command; yes,
I, who've suckled, cared for him as well,
Whose veins are filled with that
Indignant fire (for Nature in her throbs
Is similar) with which
The Indian tigress seizes on
Her offspring's foe!

(Aside). Calm, tempest, calm!

(Aloud). I lay aside accustomed womanly
Submission, and command to know
The reason of this change.

Constantine. Oh, peace, my Empress! your words do pierce
My very soul. Now would you tear
The righteous part from out yourself
By cleaving to this vile,
Abortive product of our hearts?
Think, wife, of this your husband's honor.
Know you that this proceeding is right
Well,
For what you've known of me before.

Empress. Nay, with this answer I'm not content.

Constantine. Now, peace, I say!

Crispus. This seems more like an hideous dream
Than a reality.

I thought, dear father, I
Was in your favored thought, as is the heart
Within the spreading oak.
Now I am nearly speechless with
Amazement.

Empress. Have mercy on him. Behold his weakness,
And your power.

Constantine. You know that mercy in my heart is
Knit, as tightly as a tortoise reptile to
Its shell doth cleave.
And now I carry it unto
Its utmost verge.

Theodosia. Let me combine my feeble prayers
With those of my beloved.
May now your gracious Majesty
Have mercy on us!

Constantine (to Crispus). Are you to drive me to distraction
By your brazen-faced denial?
Lead him away, I say!

Crispus. I had no pride but your own honor,
No public hope but your prosperity;
Employment none the more delightful
Than accomplishment of that dear end.

Constantine. Keep peace! No more!

Theodosia. My lord, I'm sure he never had, since first
I was by his acquaintance blest; I know
It to be true.

Empress. Old Junius his son did slay for his
Great country's need; command like that
Awaits not you.

Constantine. Be hushed! No more!

Empress. Now set him free, I say!

Constantine. Dare you defy me?
This pertinacity compels me to
Be harsh. I said 'twas treason.
What would you know besides?

Empress. Treason! And is it thus you speak of this
Dear pledge of our most mutual
Affection?

Of him, who has so nobly seconded
You in colossal undertakings?

Constantine. Ah, there it is again; and thrown into
My very face! For him to second me!
Yourself and all the rest do wish he first
Had been.

Empress. Now fie upon your foolish jealousy!

Constantine (to officers, who hesitate about taking Crispus).
Why hesitate you, slaves, in this your work?
Are you rebellious too?
Away with him,
Or else you will repent it!

(*They lead CRISPUS off.*)

Empress. Oh, heavens! he is gone! (*She swoons.*)

(*THEODOSIA shrieks and runs after CRISPUS, but is gently stopped by one of the officers. She faints and falls. DALMATIUS and MAXIMIN look pleased behind.*)

TABLEAU.



ACT IV.

SCENE FIRST.

A Room in the Palace of CONSTANTINE. A Balcony looking out. Time, night. Moonlight. CRISPUS and THEODOSIA discovered in each other's arms.

Crispus. How beautiful the night!
How grand and all-embracing!
The clouds are towering to the
Almighty's visage, like eagles to
Their eyries.
It is sublime and peaceful,
Unlike the turmoil which agitates
Our own unhappy breasts.
Here, for a respite brief, we twine ourselves
In other's arms, and think with sorrowful
Regret of former lot.

Theodosia. Ah, yes, my heart's companion, agony
Does shower itself upon us.

Crispus. Is this the terminus of our
Amor'ous journey, in the black
Seclusion of a dungeon deep!

Theodosia. Alas, how transient are our joys below!
Darkness doth succeed the light, as night
The day.

Crispus. Our prospect was as fair as e'er
Met mortal's gaze. 'T was that

Which verdant Summer shows when she
Her loveliest paints,
Abundant in her mellow fruit :
Cerulean skies extend above,
And verdant shades below.
(*Pointing to moonlight.*) Or now, as when we
In her face do look,
The moon through lattice casement steals,
Bright Venus, with her radiant face,
Attendant and companion to
Her there ;
Effulgent sheen on light clouds stealing,
And gentle breezes surging through the trees.
I think, beloved of my soul,
Our gracious father (for I must call
Him such) is but the prey of a
Most envious harpy, as a child
Of Satan desires to sow the seeds
Of misery among us.

Theodosia (*looking off*). There stand our jailors grim !
For what is thine is mine, in grief or joy.
Would I could reverse the scene, — be Perseus to my
Andromeda !
Thou see'st, dearest, our visions were
Prophetic.

Crispus. 'Tis true, we're bound by iron band
Of Fate.

Theodosia. Do our fond hopes receive
Thus cruel damper ! I possess thee in
My heart, but Fate doth place me from
Your presence.
How different our state from what it was
On yester night ! The heavenly
Effulgence from on high was
To us a boon.

It now is but an aggravation of
Our misery.

Crispus. My love, if I can break the bonds of this
Unrighteous slavery, I will. And, if
Communication be
A possibility, pray fly
To some retreat afar, where we can meet.

Theodosia. I fear such hopes are but frail hairs
To cling to now.

Crispus. Do not despair, beloved of my heart :
The powers of Heaven do sympathize
With victims of oppression.
Some way by which we can escape will be
To us made known.

We must be patient. Ills patiently endured
Half vanquished are.

Theodosia. 'Tis so indeed.

Crispus. Farewell, sweet Bird of Paradise ! If Fate
Denies reunion here, it will be sure
To grant it with redoubled joy to us
On high (*pointing upward*).

Theodosia. With dire foreboding is my soul now filled,
But Heaven's will be done.
Farewell, sweet one.

May love so light those prison walls that, e'en
Without my presence there, the gloomy place
Will be transformed into a bower of love !
Our souls will still commune,
If earthly forms do not.

Crispus. Thy speech doth fill my aching heart
With comfort.

Farewell, again farewell.

My jailors are here about my side.

(*They embrace. The jailors enter, and bind CRISPUS and
remove him. They are gazing at each other as CRISPUS is
led off. Exit THEODOSIA, weeping, opposite side.*)

*Enter CONSTANTINE and DALMATIUS. They are engaged in
conversation.*

Constantine. Was there anything besides ?

Dalmatius. Nothing, my lord. Only — only —

Constantine. What means the repetition of that word ?

Dalmatius. Sire, I hesitate to make known what
I have seen and heard, lest you will
Deem me meddling.

Constantine. Speak ! What mean you ?

Dalmatius. I was at the fête in honor of your
Son's approaching nuptials.

Enter ATTENDANT in great haste.

Attendant. My lord !

Constantine. What brings you in this haste, fellow ?

Attendant. Great sire, your son, our Prince, has fled.

Constantine. Fled ! } (*simultaneously.*)

Dalmatius. Fled ! }

Attendant. He has, so please your Majesty.

When to his prison journeying,

By lax guard and his

Herculean strength, he fled.

Dalmatius. Or, what I more suspect, my lord,

His flight was favored by traitors to

Your service.

Constantine. I am of your opinion.

Has that defiance of my royal will

Been thrown before me thus ?

Dalmatius. Indeed it has, great sire.

Constantine (to Dalmatius). This incident shall not
Interrupt our theme.

(*Aside*). He may now haste to bring repentance ;
Or punishment then may have been severe.

(*To Dalmatius*). Proceed. Was it a merry meeting ?

Dalmatius. Oh, yes, my lord. It joyously was passed.
Expected bliss most cordially
Was drunk.

His valor in the field

A flattering comment did receive.

Constantine (aside). Indeed !

Dalmatius (aside). He's moved. The blow is not
Without effect.

Constantine. Remained you late ?

Dalmatius. Not so, your Majesty.

His Royal Highness, your good, chaste son,

Betimes did bid us seek our homes,

Before the wine should have o'ercome

Our reasons.

Constantine. A youth most virtuous.

Dalmatius. The revellers caroused unto
His kingly prospect.

Constantine. To what! Am I yet dead! And has the Trunk yet crumbled on which the diadem Rests! Or am I now with age So paralyzed that my own arm no Power retains to hold the sceptre!

Dalmatius. What malady so strange does move Your Highness?

What have I said that you should be thus Roused beyond your wont?

(*Aside*). The physic takes effect.

Constantine. Oh, nothing. (*Aside*). I must be calm, or this My tempest's rage will thus betray me.

(*Aloud*). What other compliments were Fulsomely bestowed upon my son?

Dalmatius. Then of his daring deeds of field they spake; His majesty and glory In warlike action. They said, "Fond state will then be ours When he will be our own liege lord."

Constantine (aside). Hell and furies! Emperor again! Foul treason in my very house I find!

(*Aloud*). Then what replied the Prince to that?

Dalmatius. He thanked them kindly for their wish.

Constantine (aside). He, then, upholds them! Accepts it in my very face! O death! can this be so?

I must this treason nip within its bud. Outgeneralled by him! Oh, no! If it By other means cannot be stopped, he shall Be slain.

Dalmatius (overhearing him). Slain, my lord! Of whom do you thus speak?

Constantine. Of what concern is that to you?

Dalmatius. Oh, naught, my lord. Yet must I then Acknowledge thus to see your son so much Exalted, you besides So little eulogized, did not affect Me little.

I cried, "Here's health to your so high and Well-earned state!" It was, howe'er, With deadly coldness given.

Constantine. Ye gods! That son of mine was as the rest?

Dalmatius. He was, so please your Highness.

Constantine. I here do cast him off. He is
No longer son of mine. I'll not
His presence brook here near my throne.
And thou, Dalmatius,
Do I adopt as son.

Dalmatius (aside). You most propitious stars! So soon?

Constantine. Yes, you I set where late he stood.
My confidant, my second self, thou art.

Dalmatius. My lord, be not too rash. Investigate
The matter further. Perhaps
The goodness of the cheer, the burning of
The wine, did tempt them all to utter
Things of which calm contemplation would repent.

Constantine. No, no. I'll not believe it. Wine is but
A key which does unlock what in
The mind is stored.

They spake most honestly, I warrant.
Now thou shalt fill his place.

Dalmatius. My lord, you do me too much honor.

Constantine. But on one condition
Will I grant it.

Dalmatius. Good sire?

Constantine. See that, in place of bridal-bed, there be
A funereal pile.

Dalmatius. Your speech is inexplicable, my lord.
I do not understand you.

Constantine. Surmise you not, from what
You've seen and heard?
I mean my son.

Dalmatius. What! a murder? Do consider good,
My lord.

Constantine. Not so. I am as firm as Jove's great throne
Above. He must die!
Do the deed, or worm-like still crawl on
Within your menial office.

Dalmatius. Well, be it done, my lord, as you command
It to be so. Your throne's assurance is
Not firm without it. By what means
Shall the deed be perpetrated?

Constantine. I care not by what means, as long 's the End 's obtained. See it be done right quickly.

(*Aside*). Ere the dark, imperious hand upon

The dial's face hath turned where now

It points; and ere the sun

Diurnal voyage far hath sailed upon

The sea of light; or sulphurous

And subterranean rivers

A lengthened course have run within

The embryonic centre of the earth;

When vaporous Night enshrouds the world,

And owls and bats.

The symbols dire of mischievous Night,

Are wickedly awake,—the deed

Must then be done. For his base life,

Like hissing serpent,

Is coiling round my very heart.

There is no peace while he draws breath.

(*Aloud*). Be sure that my injunctions

Are obeyed.

Dalmatius. My dupe, I have you now!

My plans work well. I do ascend into

The height to which I aimed, as does

The wingéd vulture to its nest.

The Emperor alarmed to desperation!

I see my scheming journey's end appear

Far sooner still

Than my anticipations e'er had dreamed.

[*Erit.*

Enter CONSTANTINE and MINERVINIA, coming from opposite directions, and meeting.

Minervinia. My lord, I do rebound to thee

The joyous news which you do know

Already.

Our dear, beloved son is at his home

Once more.

Constantine (*aside*). His stay will be but short.

Minervinia. I see in this, my lord, the good and soft
Relenting heart of old.

Constantine (*aside*). Relenting! Ah, did she but know all!

Minervinia. It was but done to gloss
Thy public justice o'er,
To teach thy people all
The elder Brutus lived again in you.
I was short-sighted when I
Deemed you sincere.

Constantine. Yes, wife, I could not carry rigor to
Its just extreme.

(Aside). I thus must feign approval,
To hide the dark intent which
Lingers in my heart.

Minervinia. Now come, dear Constantine, embrace
Me as of old,
On this reunion of ourselves and son.

Constantine (aside). Oh, torture! torture!

[*They embrace.* EMPRESS *exits.*

Thus must I be now, like the
Secret thief
Who hides himself within whate'er
He has to do.
Farewell, my Empress! Had I but now
Thy feeling for thy son, I would
All worldly glory shun.

[*Exit.*

Enter DALMATIUS, looking off in opposite direction.

Dalmatius. Ah, see where comes my duped
Accomplice!

Enter MAXIMIN.

Dalmatius. How now, good friend?
Success on this occasion I do wager.

Maximin. But, if the stakes were large, you would
Be beggared.

Ah! do you think I now refer
To Helena, the Maid-of-Honor?
Oh, no. I have abandoned her.
She's naught but a coquette,
Who nothing wants but all my money.
With beauteous Theodosia, I did
As you desired.
For aught that I can tell, she slept
As soundly as before.

And as for moving planets from
Their spheres, all things moved
Calmly on.

Dalmatius. Ah, well !

Maximin. Although I am so great, no one
Appreciates it. It were better to
Return to my prosaic life of old,
As soldier. There is more prosperity.
When I was at Collegium,
My parents told me I
Would make a Cicero.
In Plutrarch, of him, Demosthenes
As well, I read.
In imitation of the Grecian orator,
I went unto the seacoast, and there
To the great waves declaimed.
But I was at the class's tail ;
And, since it hath not yet appeared,
I surely have been misinformed,
Or unappreciated.

Dalmatius. Of course you've been
Quite unappreciated.
I have another and a surer method
To gain the prize for which you seek.

Maximin. Now what is that, I pray ?

Dalmatius. It is but simple, often used as well,
And most successfully :
Kill her lover.

Maximin. What ! I kill him ! I commit
A murder !

I greatly fear to do it,
Although I'm soldier great and warlike
In the field ; but yet a murder
Vile, that all the laws of Gods and
Men condemn. I dread
To do. Besides, I fear
Our monarch's vengeance.
Although imprisonment was caused
By him, when touched by the
Assassin's hand,
He would most terribly mete punishment
Upon my head.

Dalmatius. Oh, fear it not. I have so seasoned well
His ear with calumny, that he has e'en
Now called for execution of the deed.

Maximin. I shall be most assured of that
Ere I attempt the deed,
As well for soul as body's sake ;
For, with that, all would not be well
If I had not his high command to bear
It up.

Dalmatius. Well, ease your mind with sophistry
Now, if you will. Pooh ! What's
The killing of a man ?
'Tis but the trimming of a tree, —
The cutting-off of limbs which but
Retard its growth.
It is because of damned custom,
And canting laws, to make poltroons
Of men,
So that base tyrants can hold
Them easily in check.
You would not quake to slay a fowl :
Why should you be the more a
Murderer to slay this man than
Herdsman are, who take the lives
Of innocent, kind animals ?
Their death the state of man improves ;
So his will yours.
And for discovery, there is
No possibility of that,
For here all friends are thought to be.
What 's more, we will incarcerate
Our weapons in dumb ground.
Come, friend. It is but as we look
At things whether they are bad or not.
Use reason. Subvert base custom,
And live alone by judgment of
Your own.

Maximin. But I do fear.

Dalmatius. Why, fear is foolish, man ;
For, if you're injured, you suffer
From that wound and fear besides ;

If not, the latter mystic suffering you have.
When free of all such cowardly
Impediments, you only feel
Realities, relieved of other burdén.

Maximin. Now you, who are a great philosopher,
May be thus quieted ; but my
Poetic temperament is far
More sensitive.

Dalmatius (aside). It is a cowardly blanket,
To hide poltroonery beneath.

(*Aloud*). Now, will you follow my advice?

Maximin. I will ! I see it now, for you to me
Have made it clear as day.

Dalmatius. We'll to't at once.

He yet cannot have reached his
Theodosia's house. I'll stop
His passage there.

Go meet me thereabout at once.

[*Exit MAXIMIN.*

The Prince once gone, the Emperor
Right soon will follow.

I, the nearest to the throne,
Then gloriously will succeed,
And have the lovely Theodosia
For my Empress.

I must with devilish circumspection
Close

What I so foully have begun.

[*Exit.*

SCENE SECOND.

The suburbs of Rome. Landscape in the distance, with hills covered with woods, etc. At left of stage, THEODOSIA'S house. A storm. Thunder and lightning.

Enter DALMATIUS.

Dalmatius. This dreadful night is proper time
For scene which I have now to act.
'Tis such as grandams tell of before
The fire. The glimm'ring lightning
Dims our eyes,

And nauseates us now with too much light ;
The cannonading thunder 's pouring its
Tremendous volleys all along
The heavens.

The rain does fall in torrents, as if
The Powers fearful fools call good
Were weeping at great destruction
Those of Hell were executing.
Tornadoes now do carry their
Destructive vapors through the sky,
And sweep all things before ; rooting trees
From off their bases ; blowing cabins o'er,
Destroying crops, and marring all
They meet.

Great earthquakes swallow villages
And cities, men, ships, and mountains.
Or whatso'er they chance to find,
When hungry jaws of Hell do ope,
Demanding prey.

The heavens are cold and wild ;
Long streaks of clouds beneath,
And fiery red above.
'Tis hard for moon and stars through
Such opacity to peer.

This night must not pass o'er
Before the work is consummated :
For I fear the Emperor will soon relent.
His fond, soft heart, on meditation,
Will countermand the order.

Within the howling, moaning of
The wind, methinks I hear the groans
Of my forthcoming victim.
He is to pass this lonely road upon
His journey home,
That home he ne'er will reach.

(A flash of lightning is seen.)

A bolt so near ! I am here betimes.
My fooled accomplice will ere long
Arrive.

I promised him to aid in his attack,
And strike a blow myself.

But I will not (to be more safe)
Be of the scene,
But will secrete me by.
My tool, howe'er, shall ne'er escape
The perpetration of the deed. (*Retires back.*)

Enter MAXIMIN.

Maximin. This awful night afflicts me to the soul.
I fear, by coming here. that he, for whom
I do design my blade, will make me
Sure with his.
And, if my friend had not assured me well
That I was made right valiant,
I should myself believe
A coward.
But great ones are unconscious.
Dalmatius is not here! It is now past
The hour on which we had agreed.
Ha! there my victim comes!
He can't escape my sword. (*Retires up stage.*)

Enter CRISPUS.

Crispus. It is a black night truly.
The rain comes falling down,
Now giving life and vigor to the
Sterile earth,
As it has gasped with thirst so long.

(*Maximin comes from behind, stabs Crispus in the back,
and then retires.*)

Crispus (tottering). Ah! what coward 's this,
Who takes advantage of the night,
Comes forth and slays me!
My tread, which was as firm
As is the Indian elephant's.
Now totters like a wounded fowl!
I thought all friends were found within
Our state.

My father dear, with this my dying breath
I do forgive the wrong done unto me,
Which I believe was not of thy
Clear reason made.

My thread of life is breaking off :
Old Mother Earth demands the
Payment of her debt ;
My brain reels round ;
This clod of clay, this mould of earth,
Does sink into its grave !
But mine eternal soul will tower
Above all sense and change ;
It shall to heaven ascend, and I within
The Temple of the Gods shall live.
O'er a bright, full sea of gilded clouds,
An arching rainbow, with
Its coruscated coat, doth there appear :
Bright seraphs fair
Are wending wingéd way around ;
Above, the mighty Jupiter upon
His throne doth sit ;
And all is peace and blessedness.
I leave this chrysalis for wingéd flights
Above.

I die. Dear Theodosia, of comfort be.

(Looking towards her house.)

And stay not long behind.
Come to my arms, my dearest Theodosia,
Come !
The low'ring tempest sings a requiem
Of rest. *(Dies.)*

Enter THEODOSIA, from her house, with a lighted lamp in her hand.

Theodosia. What noise was that I heard above
The tempest?
It was a human wail.

(Seeing Crispus dead upon the ground.)

Ha ! what is this ! Some one dead !

(Looking at his face with lamp, she gives a shriek of horror.)

Can this most direful scene be real.
Or is it but imaginative painting
Of a fiend?
Alas, it is too real!
Dead, dead, and gone forever!
What do I here? What is this life to me?
A desert dreary now, without my lord.
No longer I'll remain in this
Most loathsome realm of murder,
Hate, and death. (*Drawing a dagger.*)
I have a dagger here.
By its true point of steel,
My peace shall find.
Ah, yes! by leaving world of misery,
I shall with him upon
A soaring eagle sail into the sea
Of light. There we will fly
To realms of day eterne.
Instead of hid'ous shapes, the
Forms of beauty only there will reign;
No prisons there, or punishments refined;
No tyrants, murderers, or haters of
Their kind:
There in eternal day to live, and each
New hour to show us more
Of sacred Deity.
Beloved father, of
Thy rigor towards thy son, to him
In whom was all my bliss,—
For thy unjust suspicions,
I pardon thee with this my
Dying breath. Farewell!
(*She stabs herself.*) I thus do ease my aching soul.
Dear Crispus, now I fly to thee!

(*She falls embracing body of Crispus, and dies.*)

(*MAXIMIN enters, and, as he is proceeding across the stage,
DALMATIUS comes behind, and stabs him. DALMATIUS
then sees THEODOSIA, with a look of astonishment.*)

ACT V.

SCENE FIRST.

An Apartment in the Palace of Constantine.

Enter MINERVINIA, HELENA, and attendants.

Minervinia. How fares our own forthcoming bride?
Now she should be most cheerful; for
Her prospects are so fair. And she
Should thoughtful be as well.
It is old age of her virginity.
The birth of married life, with all its care
So womanly, and dignity, begins.
Fantastic, sentimental mantle must
Be thrown off, and deck her in
The matron's robe of common sense.
I do remember well the time that your
Great master took me from my father's house,
To be a soldier's wife.
My prospects were not half so grand
And royal as our Theodosia's;
But full of hope and sunny joy they were,
For I did have a noble treasure in
My lord.

(She summons a servant.)

Inform my son, your Prince, that I should
Like to see him.

(Aside). He now may need maternal,
Good advice. Although he is most
Noble and right valiant,
He humbly takes from me
What is well meant.

Enter MESSENGER.

Messenger. My royal lady, there is bad news.

Minervinia. What do you say? Bad news?
In danger? — of what? of whom?

The Emperor? The foe approaching?
Fire or pestilence within the city's walls?
Or has rebellion raised its serpent head
To sting us? You wag your head.
Ah, what! is it yet still more near?
Of Theodosia? — our son?
Ah, yes! from this, your staid and fixed
Expression, I do see 'tis he!
What of him? Thrown from his horse
And wounded? Scarred, perhaps, by
Sword, while practising?

Messenger. Your most dear son, our noble Prince,
Is dead.

Minervinia. Dead!

(*She swoons. All present cry, "Dead!"*)

Helena. My lady!

Messenger. Help ho! The Empress is swooning!

Enter CONSTANTINE.

Constantine. What means this cry? My Empress
Insensible? Why are you dumb?
Speak! for I would know its meaning.

(*The Empress rouses.*)

Helena. Our lady does recover.

Messenger. My sire, our royal mistress bade me go
And summon thence the Prince into
Her royal presence;
And, as I crossed the cloistered walk
Communicating with the palace of
Your son, I there beheld four men,
All bearing him, the object of my search,
A bloody, mangled corse.
They told me also (ill fate is mine
To tell this doubly direful tale!)
Beloved Theodosia,
Our future Princess, was murdered by
His side.

Constantine (aside). She too! Of that I did not think.

Messenger. We found his gorget cut behind ;
His casque at his brave feet was lying,
The snow-white plume all bathed in gore ;
Great rivers bloody poured their rougey
Stream along his greaves ;
His trusty falchion in its scabbard slept.
His baldric still and undisturbed, —
Which showed that no
Resistance had been made.
And thus he was by poltroon hand
Laid low.
Full well I know, if there had been
A multitude, if warned betimes.
They had not all escaped
With their foul lives.

Constantine (aside). So soon ! It does surprise me quite
As much at first as if I were a stranger
To the deed. I must put on detested, vile
Hypocrisy, the fact so foul
To shield from off my Empress.
How one vile deed unto another leads !
The Devil's garner's full ; and when we knock
For aught, he shows us something more.
(*Aloud*). She wakes.

Empress. My lord ! Where am I now ? Do I but
Dream, or wake ?
But what I saw and heard so foul, was of
My fancy's make. For surely
Just Heaven, that has so much, could not
Be envious of this our peace, to tear
From out our hearts that which made
Life so fair.

Constantine (aside). What torment is this now to me,
To see my partner suffer thus,
Which, were I blameless, would plunge
Me in a pitiful gloom !
But, as I am accessory to that
Which causes this most deep affliction,
I'm drowned in hell.

Minervinia. And, too, at such a time, when all
Seemed consummating,

With fête prepared, the time appointed,
And guests all summoned!

Constantine (to attendants). Inform her not of this,
The double woe.
Which treads upon us now, in loss of our
Good and almost daughter:
There's time enough for that.

Minervinia. Where hopeful white, now shrouds and
Weeping black appear.

Constantine (aside). There is at times much joy at
Funerals,
And sorrow great at weddings, and at
Births grave maledictions.

(Aloud). But where was this?
How was it brought about? Here, near
Our very palace gates, where we had all
Esteemed our friends?

Messenger. Great sire, of the sad circumstances know
I not. But, seeing this dread sight,
I pressed me to inform you.

Constantine. This shall be ascertained.
The murderer cannot escape:
All places shall be searched.
When captured, this, our heaviest hand
Of justice, on accused shall fall.

(Empress leans on Constantine.)

Minervinia. Come, lead me to my bed, I feel
So very faint.

My boy, thy mother comes to thee.
The plucking of the scion caused so deep
A wound, that tree must wither.

[Exeunt slowly.]

SCENE SECOND.

A Public Square outside the Palace.

Enter CONSTANTINE.

Constantine. The deed is done; the blow is struck;
My son is dead; and I,

A murd'rous criminal !
O Satan, how have you decoyed me !
Within my soul, where all was peace,
Now burning hell eats up my very life.
I would that lion jaws
Of darksome chaos would all
Things swallow, than keep me thus
In fiery torments !

(Placing his hand on his head.)

Oh that there were
Remedial channel on this roof, to clear
Me of my cloudy smoke,
Or source to carry from my soul
The blackness it contains !
I pictures see most dire,
And shapes of horrid form portrayed,—
Deep maelstroms, sending forth
Great sheets of burning flame,
Where venomous serpents hiss and sting.
Where I saw only forms of beauty, love,
And heart, now beings all of solid ice
I do behold.
I look upon a land in which the sun
Has never deigned to smile,—
A world of ice.
Where was a warm and radiant blood,
By heavenly beauty glowingly inspired.
Most cold, congealéd snow is found :
And where on high the grand
Illumination, dimly do now
Behold revolving, filmy disks.
I gazed, and thought
Of glorious transportation thither ;
But now, instead of lodging, I
Should, skate-like, slide from one to other,
Sure going on eterne.
A harbor never finding.
My soul in sulphur Styx
Doth seethe.

Blest confidence did in me reign :
Now I do fear that each grim footfall
Hath in its sound the noise
Of my betrayal.
If such a thing shall hap, I shall
Be pointed at as the most bloody
Monarch, who, to obtain a foolish selfdom,
Struck off his own right arm.
If sov'reign Reason had 'nt been dethroned,
Grim Torment's sway had then been held
In hellish shades below.
How could my Prince's elevation
Have injured me?
And, as of bone and flesh of mine he was
Composed, at his
Great triumph exultation should have rung ;
And on a double throne,
The sceptre wielding with me jointly.
Thus, where I thought new life obtained,
I find myself more deeply stained.
'Tis well my Empress is no more ;
For, were she here, she would but spurn me :
But human spurning, when the conscience
With its fever burns, is then of naught avail.

*Enter a COUNCILLOR with train of followers, one of them
with food.*

Councillor (after watching Constantine pace up and down).
My lord, why take your son's death so
To heart?

Such accidents are not of rare
Occurrence here below.

Come, gracious master, resume your former life.

Now taste once more of food. *(Offers him food)*

Constantine. Ah, no ; no nourishment I'll take :
Of even life's necessities, myself
I will deprive, till this foul spot
Be blotted out.

Councillor (aside). What do I hear?

Constantine. My peaceful nightly rest is gone !

Were once the black, foul stain removed,
I'd feel as a young mother does
At first delivery.

I am as is the victim of
An hopeless passion,
Desiring that which never'll be.

Councillor (aside). I do suspect what now I fear to name.

Constantine. Ah! was his death here caused by me!

Councillor (aside). My ears did then reveal the horrid truth!

Constantine. Ah he whose birth, and my
Beloved Minervinia's pains,
I then hung o'er with anxious hope!
Am I myself,

Or hath Pythagorean transmigration been
Accomplished ere

The mortal vesture hath

To unsubstantial elements conformed!

This savage isolation now is terrible.

I have great earthly conquests made;

But my own inward war has been

But little watched.

"He that his spirit conquereth is greater

Far than he that taketh city," saith

The poet David.

'Tis so indeed. What now

Are all my triumphs, —

Successful monument (without

A stone displaced) which I have reared?

A barren nothing!

(*To Councillor*). 'Tis true, repentance chasteneth.

My son, were he but in this life again, —

How would I now for his forgiveness

Plead!

Councillor. Astonishment compels me to be dumb,
My lord.

Constantine. I'd give up all my Empire to recall
The deed.

Could he but now return to earth,

There's not a wish I would not gratify, —

Make him the monarch of it all,

And I'd assume the beggar's rags, and be

A lazar at his feet.

How oft have I lamented this
My hasty temper !
Offence then being venial, I could
Unto the injured make amends ;
But now that 's past all hope.
I was as one in health, who prize
It not, when I did have my son
In happiness.

Councillor (aside). My murderous suspicion
Must be secreted.

(Aloud). Are you quite well, my lord?

Constantine (aside). "Are you quite well?" How much
Within that question lies !

The difference 'tween well and ill is great ;

In body even, far more in mind.

This spiritual disease is terrible.

Now I no longer see his heavenly face :

Its shadow to my mental vision doth appear,

By day and in my dreams.

A burning conflagration doth consume

My very soul, although there 's sweet

Forgiveness in his face.

He 's torn from me like an

Uncallowed bird from place beneath

The fond maternal wing.

I thought to have thee close my

Death-struck eyes,

But here must I now die alone : all

My dear ones have departed ;

There 's none to whisper kindly words into

My ear.

As a deciduous leaf, I fall

At Winter's blast approach.

(To Councillor). Great Justice, to soothe

This howling tempest in my breast,

Doth here compel me to the world

Remorse and penitence to publish.

(Statue of Crispus, in gold, disclosed at back.)

Behold the golden statue I erect

Unto the memory of this my son,

Whom I unjustly did condemn !

(*In agony*). Awake, my boy, awake
From thy so silent slumber!

Councillor (aside). This is the agony of great remorse.

Constantine. This murder foul was done so quickly, too ;
Before my rage had cooled, the fatal
News arrived!

Dalmatius, why wert thou in

This fatal deed so swift?

Your prompt allegiance

Was fatal to me.

(*Councillor overhears this.*)

Still, at his feast, they toasted him alone,

There saying naught of me.

Howe'er, the fitness of the fête

May have brought that out,

Which in his honor was, not mine.

Councillor. My lord, was this sad murder done
At your command?

Constantine. Villain, keep peace!

Councillor. You have, my lord,
Most foully been betrayed.

Constantine. How say you?

Councillor. I was at fête in honor given of
Your son ; and not a word was spoken
There disparagingly of yourself, or wrongly
In praise of him.

Constantine. There did you not carouse unto the wish
That he would be your lord-in-chief?

Councillor. No, no, my lord.

Constantine. Nor did you toast my health regrettingly?

Councillor. Not so, my lord : we toasted you
Right heartily.

Constantine. Say you so? Thus have I been misled!

Ah, now I read the leaf aright :

Dalmatius, to gain a higher place,

My son most foully did abuse!

I thought philosophy so high did soar

Above all earthly prize.

Oh, how by this degraded hypocrite

Have I been wronged!

Enter DALMATIUS.

Dalmatius. Sire, I hope that you will find
Me faithful to your service.

Constantine. You viper! who urged me to
My ruin! I'll not suffer you
To live,

For you have made me frantic!
Thus do I reward your pains! (*Stabs Dalmatius.*)

Dalmatius. Of all my villany is this the end?
I'll then defiantly go down to hell!

Constantine. Yes, yes, to hell you'll surely go; for 'tis
Your native element.
Such souls as yours from out the Devil come:
Great God would shame to make
The like of you.
You are the venomous serpent which
Has stung us all.
Misfortunes all now can be traced
To you.

(*Attendants carry off the body of DALMATIUS.*)

Councillor. Great Emperor, live as before,
In happiness.

[*Exit.*

Constantine. Why should I linger here on earth?
All hope in Life is gone!
What is this darksome maelstrom Death?
It is naught but our life.
When in the body's cave confined,
Our highest thoughts are in all space;
Then surely they do sometimes break
Their bars when here.
Can death be more than our experience
From day to day? It is not:
Now stand we amidst Eternity's
Limitless ocean!
That safe forgiveness's found alone in this
Our world, I not believe;
Or that the grave is the most final cliff
From whence Salvation flies;

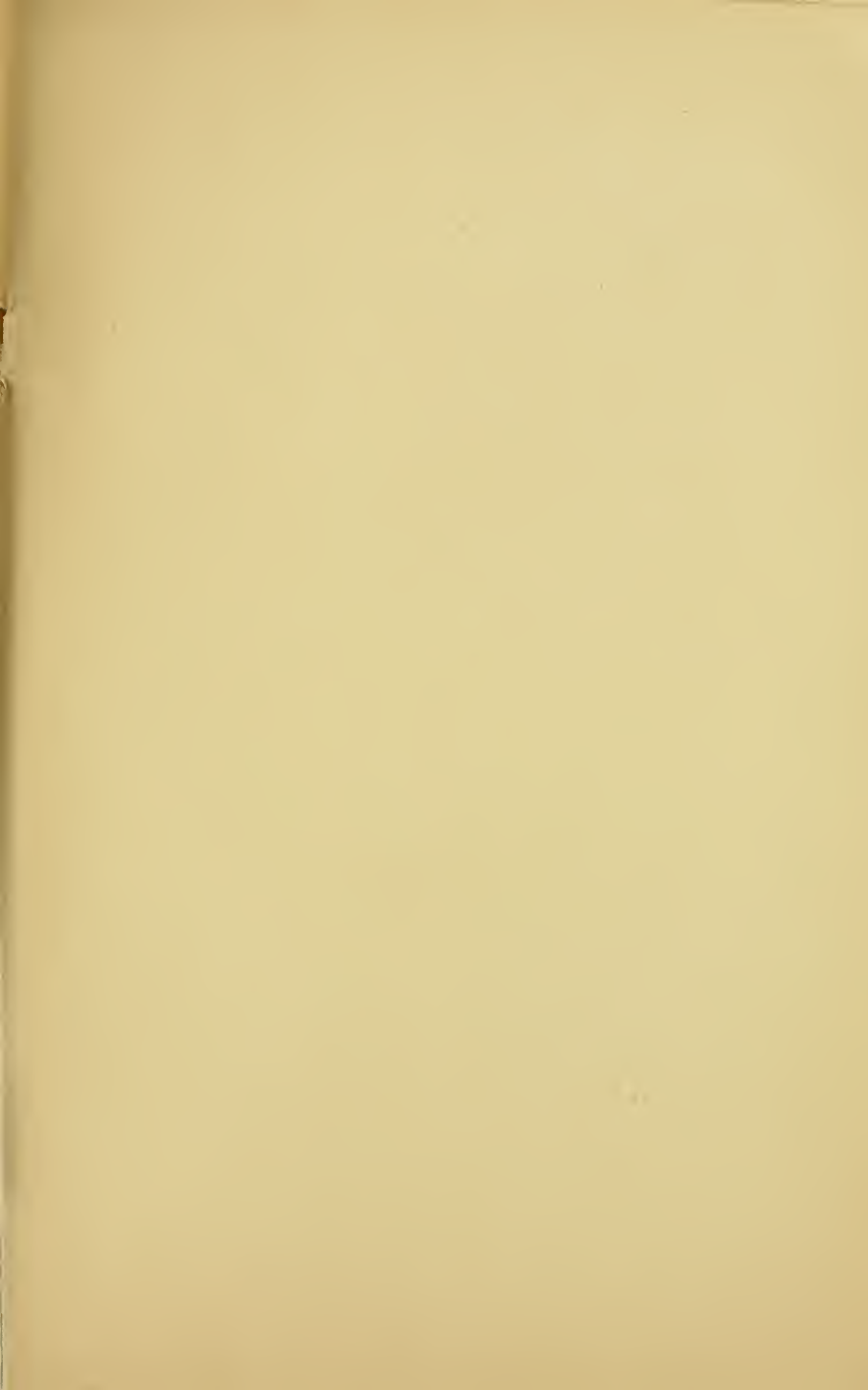
That when our eyes are closed in death,
Irrevocable fiat is
On us pronounced :
The soul 's as capable of sure
Repentance then as now, and perhaps more :
Account of the abyss which yawns
'Tween this world and the next.
No longer will I linger here
In grim remorse,
But seek relief in death.
Thus do I expiate the wrongs
My foolish jealousy has caused !

(Stabs himself.)

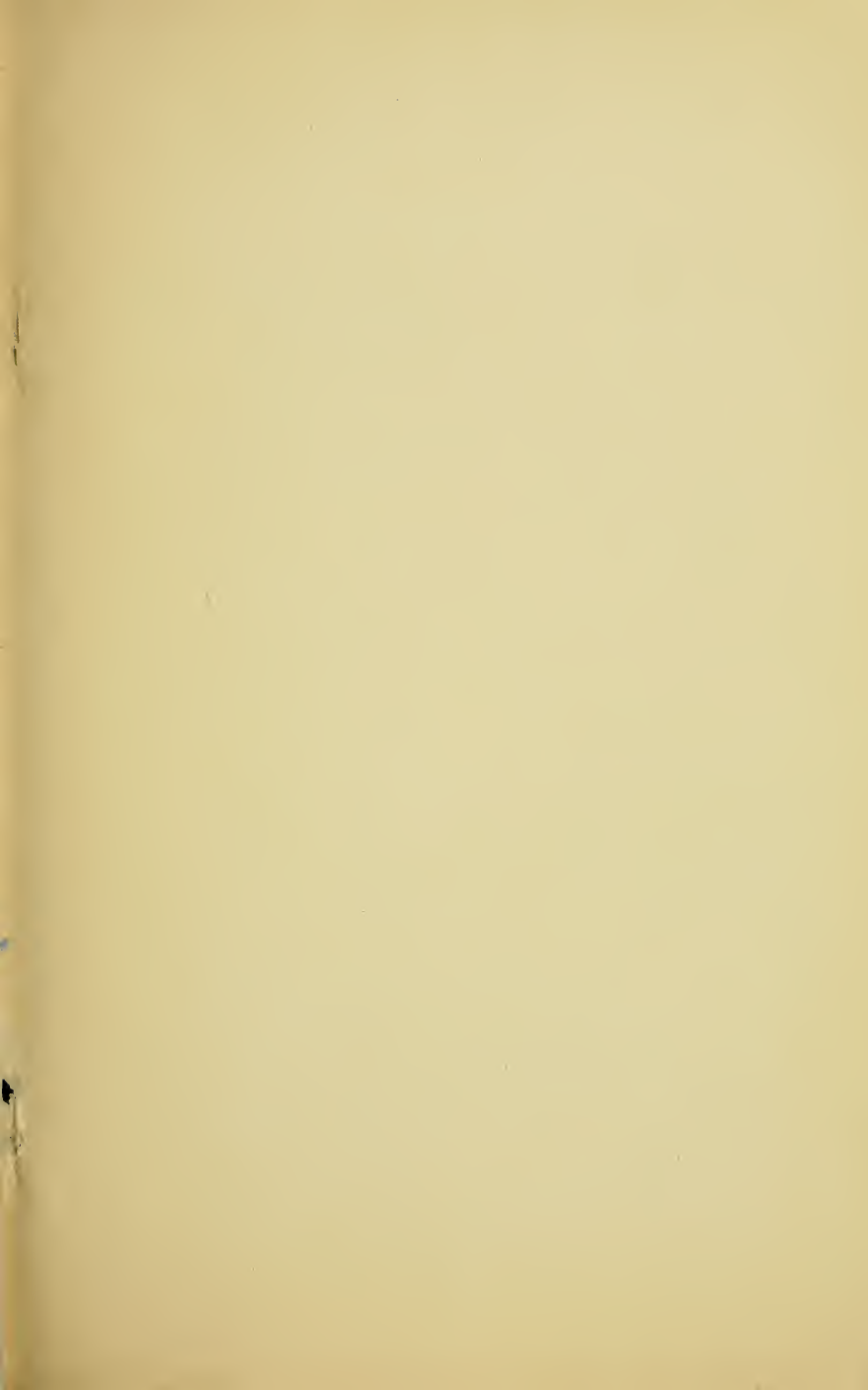
(He falls and dies.)

THE END.









LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 016 103 585 3 ●

